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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001036

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR;
JOINT STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

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SUBJECT: FATAH AND HAMAS REACTIVATE COMMITTEES ON PRISONER
RELEASES; ABBAS AND FAYYAD SAY NO CHANGE IN PA SECURITY
DOCTRINE

REF: JERUSALEM 1013

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) Summary. Under Egyptian pressure, Fatah and Hamas reactivated two joint committees to discuss releasing detainees and reopening institutions closed for "political" reasons. President Abbas (Abu Mazen) and PM Fayyad told the Consul General the PA will not release anyone who would threaten public order. Fatah officials say the committees will not achieve anything beyond a symbolic reconciliation on paper. The head of Fatah's representation to the committees, Azzam al-Ahmad, said that Egypt is determined to host a reconciliation signing ceremony July 7, and is pushing Fatah and Hamas to reach agreement on security issues before then. Al-Ahmad said Fatah will not agree to Hamas's current terms for reconciliation, including a factional committee to liaise between the PA and Hamas, and only a nominal PASF presence at the Gaza crossings. End Summary.

JOINT COMMITTEES START WORK
TO FREE "POLITICAL PRISONERS"

¶2. (S) At Egyptian insistence, Fatah and Hamas officials in mid-June reactivated two joint committees -- one in the West Bank and one in Gaza -- with the goal of ending "political" incarcerations and opening institutions that were closed for "political reasons." The committees met June 14 and 17, according to Chief of the Preventive Security Organization's (PSO) Analytic Department, Zakariah Muslih. The two sides exchanged lists of several hundred Hamas detainees in the West Bank and 209 Fatah detainees in Gaza. Salim Qaisi, a senior Mukhabarat official, told PolSpec June 18 that President Abbas agreed to release 68 Hamas detainees in tranches of roughly 20 each as a gesture to Egypt. Qaisi said the PASF have finished interrogating these 68 detainees and would have released them anyway, but the timing of the release is intended to placate the GoE. He said the PASF intend to continue arrest operations against Hamas in the West Bank. In separate conversations, President Abbas and PM Fayyad told the Consul General that no one would be released who threatens public order, and the PA's security doctrine would remain unchanged.

FATAH PARTICIPATING TO APPEASE
EGYPT, DOUBTS EFFICACY OF COMMITTEES

¶3. (S) Azzam al-Ahmad, Fatah's chief representative to the committees, told PolSpec June 17 that Fatah is participating in the committees to appease the GoE and avoid blame for a failure, but that he does not expect the committees to resolve the issue of "political" detainees. He said the

Egyptians are determined to host a signing ceremony for the Palestinian factions on July 7, and therefore asked Fatah and Hamas to put off the bigger issues of political platform, government formation, and security service reform. Al-Ahmad said the best the GoE can hope for is a symbolic agreement on the factions' intent to reconcile, but that any agreement will disintegrate when the factions engage later on political issues. (Note: Egyptian officials have also apparently tried to mediate on the ground in the West Bank. PM Fayyad told the Consul General that he rebuffed an Egyptian intelligence service effort to mediate a PA-Hamas standoff in Qalqiliya on June 4 that left two Hamas militants dead and a third in PA custody. End note.)

HAMAS'S CONDITIONS FOR SHORT-TERM
RECONCILIATION UNACCEPTABLE TO FATAH

¶4. (S) Al-Ahmad said Egyptian officials told him that the Chief of Hamas's Political Bureau, Khaled Mishaal, is willing to reach an agreement to end the division between Fatah and Hamas if the PA will stop arresting Hamas members and reopen Hamas-run institutions in the West Bank. Al-Ahmad said that, according to Egyptian officials, in exchange for an end to the PA campaign against Hamas, Hamas would agree to form a factional committee to liaise between the PA and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip; to hold PA elections in January 2010 based on a system of 75 percent proportional and 25 percent constituency-based voting; and to allow 300 Presidential Guard personnel to operate at the Gaza crossings (principally the Rafah crossing). Publicly, al-Ahmad stated June 17 that Fatah cannot accept a factional liaison

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committee that recognizes Hamas in Gaza as the political equivalent of the PA; and that Fatah wants a joint security force consisting of roughly 100,000 personnel to operate in Gaza. Fatah also prefers a 100 percent proportional representation election system in future elections, although al-Ahmad stated privately that Fatah could compromise on that.
WALLES